

Shyakh Hamza Yusuf - Between Ignorance and Extremism



Like Sidi Abdal Hakim said, “Tradition or extradition” - it's not a joke, and people really have to think about the presence of over 25 million Muslims in Western Europe. We have to really think about what we're doing here, what we're planning to do here in the future. For those of you who have children, you have to really think about what's going to be the situation of your children and your children's children. I mean, these are really serious situations. Unfortunately, we have *sufaha*. We have people who are simply *safeeh*, and I don't care how sincere they are, there are plenty of sincere people out there but we have people who are fools. They are foolish people. There are people that read things and take them literally. This is what Shaykh Abdallah was talking about. You have *naqal* and you have *'aql*... Unfortunately, we have some *naqal*-heads out there.

We have people who are not using their intellect when they read verses. Don't think these people haven't been around since the beginning, really. They believe they are rightly guided and our Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said “*Yahmilu hadha al-ilm min kul qarnin uduluhu*” – that this knowledge will be carried in each generation by upright people, “*yanfuna 'anhu tah rith al-ghalīn*” – they'll repudiate the misquotations of extremists.

Tah rith is – *yuh arrif al-kalim 'an muwād i'i* – is to take something out of context. So the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said that rightly guided scholars will repudiate the misquotations of extremists – *wa intih āl al-mubtilīn*, and plagiarisms of people that are trying to undermine the religion or attack the religion, these are just fabrications, people that fabricate – *wa ta'wīl al-jahilīn* - and interpretations of zealots, of ignorant people.

Now there's no doubt that the Muslims are suffering in many different places. But again, this is not new. There have been many many periods where Islam was under siege, had troubles, had difficulties. We have two *sunnah*. In fact, we have three *sunnah*. We have the *sunnah* of the prophet in Mecca. One of the things that Ibn

Taimiyyah said (rahimahu Allah) is that there's nothing that's abrogated in Islam so that if the same circumstance(s) in which a ruling was applicable returns, then the earlier ruling becomes applicable to the present circumstance(s) as well. In other words, there's no absolute abrogation. There is no verse in the Qur'an that's absolutely abrogated with the exception of about four verses on which there is no difference of opinion. All of the verses in the Qur'an (Wasbir 'ala ma yaqulun, wahjurhum hajirun jamilah, lasta 'alayhim bi musaytir, laysta 'alayhim bi wakil, laysta 'alayhim bi jabar) are verses in which the Prophet was told to be patient. Those verses are all applicable because that's the sunnah of Mecca.

One of the things Hudaybiyya Ibn al Yamaan said is "In the end of time, (yukhair al-maru bayn al-'aji wa al-fujur), and of the tabi'in listening to this (qabaha Allahu al-'ajaz), Qabahak Allahu anta – al-'aju khairun min al-fujur," He said that there will be a time when people will be given a choice between powerlessness and going to extremes (fajara means to go beyond a limit). One of the tabi'in heard him say this and said, "May Allah make ugly powerlessness." To this, Hudaybiyya Ibn al Yamaan replied, "May Allah make you ugly. Powerlessness is better than going outside of the boundaries."

So the sunnah of ibtihal, the sunnah of being oppressed is Makkah. Look how the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) behaved. One of the reasons that I stayed a Muslim was when I studied the seerah, the period of Makkah was an overwhelming period. Anybody that studies it has to come to that conclusion about our Prophet (s.a.w.s.). It's what made him great. And if you're denying the Makkan period, you're denying something that's absolutely overwhelming...there's more time in Makkah than there was in Medina: thirteen out of twenty three years! So if you deny the Makkan period and say that that was all just strategies until he got into power, then at that point you stop forgiving and you stop overlooking. We seek refuge in Allah from misunderstanding who the Messenger of our Allah was. Kana ah, lam al-nas – the prophet (s.a.w.s.) was the most forbearing of people. And this is what we have to return to our community because we've created a culture now in which people can't see any other way out than this reactionary mode. We've been spinning our wheels for far too long, and the Muslims really need to think at a deeper level.

Hikma - wisdom, wherever it is, wherever you find it, you should follow it. Einstein said that the definition of madness is to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results. The Muslims, really, we have to ask ourselves what we're doing about our strategy, about our attitudes and behaviours.

Then finally, about Denmark, because you are having your demonstration tomorrow, I find it really odd that the very thing that we are accusing so many people in the West of doing towards Muslims is that which Westerners blame all Muslims for: the actions of a handful of people. This is the same thing that Muslims end up doing. I mean whoever did these cartoons was a fool, and unfortunately there was some malevolent intent there. I don't have any doubt because it wasn't like an artist who drew some pictures and then there was an editorial decision whether they print them or not. It was actually somebody who wanted to find somebody to do this.

But part of this, unfortunately - and we have to be honest - is that the Muslim community of Denmark has failed to be an upright community. Some of the really serious social problems with Muslims in Europe are occurring in Denmark. You can

study the situation there because there are plenty of statistics that have been done on this. This is what we have to ask ourselves as a community: "Have we been honouring our prophet?" In other words, "Has there been anything in our behaviour in these lands that has led to people having a bad opinion of who our Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is to us? We have to ask because we are ambassadors of the messenger of Allah. We are his ambassadors and people are going to judge him based on our actions. You cannot honour your Prophet by dishonouring his sunnah. You cannot honour your Prophet by dishonoring his sunnah. If you want to honour the Prophet (s.a.w.s.), if you really want to honour him, then practice his character, practice his moral probity, practice his excellence and his virtue towards people. Practice his forgiveness; practice his ability to smile despite all of the incredible difficulties.

This is an age, unfortunately, of brawling. We're dealing with people now, we've gone down into the ghetto, and we're just swinging it out. This is not an age of discussion; this is not an age of discourse. This is something the poet Yeats said in a poem that he wrote in the earlier part of the last century. He said, "Come let us mock at the great, That had such burdens on the mind, And toiled so hard and late, To leave some monument behind, Nor thought of the levelling wind." And then he goes on, "Come let us mock at the wise,... Come let us mock at the good,..." and finally, "...Mock mockers after that, That would not lift a hand maybe, To help good, wise, or great, To bar that foul wind out, for we, Traffic in mockery." And this is the age that we are living in. It's not an age of virtue; it's not an age that respects the other. This includes the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike.

Islam is a high religion and it calls to the highest human ideals. We as Muslims have to live up to that. If we want to have the moral high ground where the sacred is honoured than we have to honour the sacred in ourselves and in others. But if we lose that moral high ground, then we sound like hollow men. When we have anti-Semitism in our newspapers all over the Arab world, what moral high ground do we have to talk about what's put in cartoons, and what's not put in cartoons? We have to be people of truth in order to call others to the truth.

The Qur'an says to the people of the book, "Laystum 'ala shay hata tuqimatu taratu wa al-injil" – You have nothing until you apply your tawrah and your Gospel. Well the mafhum al-awla, the a priori understanding of that verse, is that you have nothing until you apply your Qur'an. Muslims, we have nothing until we apply our Qur'an. Wa Qulu lil-nasi husna.

We condemn this, and we recognize the double standards in the West. When you have people now that are being prosecuted in England for holding up a sign that says, "Cut off the heads of anybody that criticizes the prophet Muhammad," I mean, that person is not going to go and cut off anybody's head. They are just expressing themselves, and it's more silliness, but if you are going to prosecute him for inciting to hatred, but then attacking the messenger of God? That's something that 1.3 billion people hold sacred, and that's not inciting to hatred? So there are double standards here, we recognize those double standards, and I'm opposed to those double standards, but I also recognize the fact that we as Muslims will not have a strong moral voice until we ourselves are applying our truths. We have to do it ourselves, and Denmark is a nation of good people. This stupidity of demonizing an entire nation because of the actions of one or two fools in that nation. That is as silly as condemning the Saudi Arabians for the actions of a handful of Saudi Arabians and

their criminal activities. The Danish defend human rights in the Muslim world. The embassies that were in Egypt, the Danish embassy actually, is involved in monitoring human rights transgressions in prisons in Egypt. I mean, this is the work that the Danish have been doing. And trampling on their flag is absolutely unacceptable. First of all the flag has a religious symbol on it, which is the cross. And second of all, Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala says "La tasub allazina yada'una min dun illah, fa yasub Allah 'ajwan bi ghair 'ilm." Do not curse the idols of other people because they will curse God. So there are people that will take the Saudi Arabian flag that has "la illaha illa Allah; Muhammad al-Rasul Allah" and stomp on it as a retaliation. The prophet said, "Let not one of you curse his parents" and they said to him "How do we curse our parents?" It is done by cursing their parents and they in turn curse your parents. These are the types of things that, as a community, we have to break down. I really believe the onus is on us. We have to tell them who our Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is. Whoever that caricature was, I don't recognize him because that's not my Prophet. That's some poor man's projection in his own self, of complete misunderstanding. And I reject that, and I reject any insult or denigration. Our Prophet (s.a.w.s.), we honour him and we love him, but we should honour him and love him by living up to his words, by living up to his religion, and then by telling people about him. Tell who he was, not just in our words, but in our actions. Jazakum Allahu Khair. Wa Assalamu Alaikum.

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